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Daily Environment Report

July 14, 2017 - Number 134

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Leading the News

Chemicals

Acting EPA Chemicals Chief to Retire, Leaving Leadership Vacuum

The top official in the EPA's chemicals and pesticides office will retire Aug. 24, according to an email obtained by Bloomberg BNA.

Endangered Species

Supreme Court Asked to Review Scope of Habitat Protections

The Supreme Court has been asked to decide how far a federal agency can go in designating critical habitat for a protected species—specifically, whether the designation can include private land where the species does not exist, cannot currently exist, and may never exist.

Energy

Manchin Aims to Tack Appalachian Ethane Hub on Energy Bill

West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin (D) is ready to take a stab at creating an ethane storage hub in Appalachia that could break ground for more ethane use nationwide, while boosting manufacturing in the region.

Special Report

Pesticides

World's Top Weed Killer Can't Shake Lingering Cancer Questions

Every year, farmers spray, on average, almost a pound of the herbicide glyphosate on every acre of cropland in the U.S., and nearly half a pound on every acre of cropland worldwide. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in Roundup, a huge source of income for its manufacturer, Monsanto Co., and the foundation for its epochal foray into genetically modified organisms. If you know nothing else about GMOs and Monsanto, know this: The St. Louis-based company re-engineered the DNA of corn, ...

News

Agriculture

Brazil Ownership Law Could Fuel Land Grabbing: Environmentalists

A new Brazil law that lets squatters buy public land they've occupied and gives them legal standing in land disputes will fuel deforestation and land-grabbing, especially in the embattled Amazon rainforest, environmental groups claim.

Chemical Testing

Chemical Makers Urge EPA to Accept Non-Animal Safety Data

Chemical manufacturers want the EPA to be more receptive than they say the European Chemicals Agency has been in accepting chemical safety data derived from non-animal tests.

Climate Regulation

Methane Emissions Standards Frozen Again as EPA Mulls Appeal

The EPA has two weeks to decide whether it will appeal a ruling that forced it to reinstate methane limits for new oil and gas wells after a federal appellate court reversed course.

Coal Mining

Elon Musk Exposes Deep Coal Divide in Energy-Strapped Australia

Elon Musk's intervention in Australia's energy crisis is widening a divide over the future of coal.

Contribution

Noranda Mining Wins Stay of Asarco Superfund Case

A federal court in Utah called a time-out July 11 in long-running Superfund litigation between Asarco LLC and Noranda Mining Inc. over waste from a Utah mine (Asarco, LLC v. Noranda Mining, Inc., 2017 BL 238412, D. Utah, No.12-cv-00527, 7/11/17).

Energy

Russia Sanctions Bill Stalled by GOP Over Energy Provisions

House Republicans are throwing up new roadblocks to a Russia and Iran sanctions bill over concerns from the energy industry that a provision could block U.S. companies from lucrative foreign oil deals.

Energy

U.S., China Immersed in Talks on LNG Export, Energy Issues

U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry advanced the prospect of expanding American liquefied natural gas exports to China during a July 13 meeting with Executive Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli in Beijing.

Enforcement

Ex-Newark Watershed Manager Sentenced for Kickback Scheme

A former manager for a nonprofit that oversaw Newark, New Jersey's water supply was sentenced to eight years in prison for taking kickbacks uncovered by U.S. prosecutors investigating the bankrupt entity's activities.

International Climate

Trump Wants to Steer UN Climate Cash Toward Coal Plants

The U.S. will seek to use a United Nations fund designed to aid nations hard hit by climate change to promote the construction of coal-fired power plants around the world.

Motor Vehicles

Daimler Called to German Committee Probing Diesel Emissions

Daimler AG executives were called to a German government committee looking into possible diesel-emissions cheating following a Sueddeutsche Zeitung report that prosecutors are focusing attention on two engines that power its popular Mercedes-Benz sport utility vehicles.

Natural Resources

Reviews End for Two (Uncontroversial) National Monuments

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke isn't recommending any changes to the Craters of the Moon National Monument in Idaho and the Hanford Reach National Monument in Washington, the department said July 13.

Oil & Gas

Trump Administration Approves Eni's Arctic Oil Drilling Plan

The Trump administration has conditionally approved Eni SpA's plan to drill up to four oil exploration wells in Arctic waters, with the activity launched from a gravel island in the Beaufort Sea.

Pesticides

Missouri Lifts Ban on Herbicide Dicamba

The Missouri Department of Agriculture July 13 relaxed its temporary ban on dicamba, an herbicide at the center of a growing controversy over claims that it is responsible for crop damage in fields adjacent to where it is used.

Pesticides

Monsanto Roundup Documents Sought by European Lawmakers

European lawmakers asked a U.S. judge overseeing litigation against Monsanto Co. to help them evaluate the risk that the company's Roundup weedkiller may be linked to cancer in humans.

Regulatory Policy

Trump Tests Legal Limits by Delaying Dozens of Obama's Rules

It typically takes years for presidents to kill federal regulations they dislike, but Donald Trump has found a shortcut: He's just putting them on long-term hold.

Renewable Energy

Booming Wind, Solar to Erode Gas Demand in Americas, IEA Says

A surge in power from wind, solar and other renewable sources will begin chipping away at natural gas demand growth in the Americas over the next five years, according to the International Energy Agency.

Stormwater

Massachusetts Cities Get Stormwater Permit Relief for a Year

More than 200 small cities and towns, as well as home builders in Massachusetts, will get a year's relief from complying with a federal stormwater permit, while federal courts resolve the three separate challenges filed against it.

Sustainability

Green Bonds Face EU Litmus Test Under Sustainable Finance Rules

The European Commission backed recommendations to curb climate risk that could include European Union labels for green bonds and preferential treatment for ecologically sustainable investments.

Trade

China Seeks Cooperation on Trade, Technology With U.S. States

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for closer trade ties with individual U.S. states July 12 in a meeting with California Gov. Jerry Brown in Beijing.

Water Infrastructure

Water Infrastructure Bill Approved by House Subcommittee

A low-interest loan program to improve drinking water systems drew support from a House subcommittee, despite some concerns raised by members on both sides of the aisle.

Practitioner Insights

Chemicals

Practitioner Insights: TSCA Implementation in the Eye of the Hurricane

I would like to put the TSCA implementation actions taken to date into the broader context of our current political situation.

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